

# A Guide to the Barron Family Papers, 1802-1841

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**Author:** Trenton Hizer

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## Descriptive Summary

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### Creator

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### Repository

The Library of Virginia

## Administrative Information

## Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

## Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

## Acquisition Information

Given by the Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia, in exchange, 1943.

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# Biographical Information

Samuel (1765-1810) and James Barron (1769-1851) were the sons of James Barron (1740-1787) and Jane Cowper Barron. James senior, commanded part of the naval forces of Virginia during the American Revolution. His sons served under their father, then served in the Virginia navy until it disbanded in 1789. The Barrons joined the merchant marines. In 1798, they joined the United States Navy; Samuel as captain of the frigate *Richmond* and James as a lieutenant aboard the frigate *United States*. Samuel Barron commanded the *Philadelphia* as part of the Mediterranean squadron under Commodore Richard Dale (d. 1832) during the first year of the Tripolitan war. Command of the squadron passed to Edward Preble (1761-1807), then to Samuel Barron. Barron established his Mediterranean headquarters at Syracuse on Sicily and on Malta. Barron's orders were to blockade and negotiate with Tripoli for the return of the captain and crew of the *Philadelphia*, which had run aground and been captured after Barron's tenure. Plagued by ill health, Barron eventually surrendered command of squadron to John Rodgers (1773-1828). Samuel Barron died in 1810. His son, Samuel Barron (1808-1888) served in the Confederate navy.

James Barron, who also served in the Mediterranean squadron, commanded the frigate *Chesapeake* during its encounter with the British ship the *Leopard*. After the British attack, Barron faced a court-martial and was found guilty of neglecting to clear decks for battle. Suspended without pay from the navy for five years, Barron served aboard commercial vessels. Upon his return to the United States in 1818, he found his requests for active duty blocked by Stephen Decatur. Frustrated, Barron challenged the popular hero to a duel, killing Decatur 22 March 1820. Although given command of the *Philadelphia* Naval shipyard in 1824, Barron never commanded a naval vessel again. He died 21 April 1851 in Norfolk, Virginia.

# Scope and Content

Papers, 1802-1841, of Samuel Barron (1765-1810) and James Barron (1769-1851), officers in the United States Navy, consisting of papers, 1802-1805, of Samuel Barron during his service in the Mediterranean Squadron as commander of the U.S.S. *Philadelphia* and as squadron commander including requests from sailors; pay for marines; the U.S. frigates *Philadelphia*, *Constitution*, *Congress*, and *President*; serving in the Mediterranean; and U.S. relations with Tripoli and Tunisia. Also includes letters, 1807-1841, to James Barron regarding the U.S.S. *Chesapeake*; politics and the election of 1824; the U.S.S. *Pennsylvania*; the *Philadelphia* Naval Yard; gifts, naval matters, personal news, and a letter from John Floyd (1783-1837) to Commodore Jesse Elliot (1782-1845) requesting his pistols. Papers also include a letter, 31 May 1805, from Tobias Lear, U.S. Consul-General and Peace Commissioner, to Don Gerardo Joseph de Souza, Spanish Consul at Tripoli and Commissioner on behalf of the Bashaw of Tripoli, concerning an exchange of persons held by the United States and Tripoli.

# Contents List

## Samuel Barron Papers, 1802-1805

**Letter, 29 June 1802, from James Nicholson to Samuel Barron requesting a furlough.**

**Letter, 26 September 1804, from Lieutenant J. Johnson, commanding the marines aboard the U.S. frigate *Argus*, to Samuel Barron, commanding the American Squadron in the Mediterranean Sea, requesting a transfer to the U.S. frigate *Philadelphia* or a return to the United States.**

**Letter, 27 September 1804, from Lieutenant John Howard, commanding**

**the marines aboard the U.S.frigate Siren, to Samuel Barron requesting fund to pay the marines.**

**Letter, 24 November 1804, from George Davis, U.S. charge d'affaires at Tunis, to Samuel Barron, informing Barron of a complaint made to the Bey of Tunis concerning a Tunisian prize recaptured by an American ship**

**Report, 29 December 1804, on the U.S.frigate President, declaring it unfit for service.**

**Letter, 2 June 1805, from Commodore John Rodgers, commanding the U.S.frigate Constitution, to Samuel Barron commenting on the use of vessels to convey funds.**

**Letter, 6 June 1805, from Tobias Lear, U.S. consul-general at Algiers, to Samuel Barron, reviewing articles of a treaty negotiated between the U.S. and Tripoli.**

**Letter, 12 June 1805, from Commodore Rodgers to Samuel Barron noting that the U.S.frigate Congress has arrived.**

**Letter, 14 June 1805, from Commodore Rodgers to Samuel Barron commenting on the payment of ransom and the return of prisoners.**

## **James Barron Letters, 1807-1841**

**Letter, 28 March 1807, from Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith to James Barron inquiring about powder for the U.S. frigate Chesapeake; includes a notation by Barron**

**Letter, 11 December 1821, from John Floyd to Commodore Jesse D. Elliot requesting Elliot's pistols.**

**Letter, 20 March 1824, from J. B. Mower to James Barron concerning politics and the election of 1824.**

**Letter, 8 April 1824, from Floyd to Barron concerning an incident in New York.**

**Letter, 9 December 1828, from Commodore William Bainbridge introducing Dr. Sims to Barron.**

**Letter, 11 December 1828, from Commodore James Biddle introducing Dr. Sims to Barron.**

**Letter, 19 May 1829, from Secretary of the Navy John Branch to Barron discussing personal business.**

**Letter, 5 August 1829, from Branch to Barron acknowledging the receipt of the "stick."**

**Letter, 1 October 1829, from Branch to Barron noting that he is pleased with the plan of the ship house.**

**Letter, 22 March 1831, from acting Secretary of the Navy John Boyle to Barron noting a report and calendar sent to Barron.**

**Letter, 3 June 1837, from James Buchanan to Barron concerning the**

**emblem for the U.S.S. Pennsylvania.**

**Letters, 30 June 1837, signed by various officers at the Philadelphia Naval Yard expressing regret over Barron's retirement.**

**Letters, 1 July 1837, signed by various officers at the Philadelphia Naval Yard expressing regret over Barron's retirement.**

**Letter, 15 January 1841, from Thomas Gatewood of Norfolk, Virginia, to Barron concerning personal business.**

**Letter, 17 May no year, from Commodore James Biddle to Barron.**

**Broadside letter, no date, defending Barron from charges made by a Captain Lewis, noting that Lewis had once signed a letter regretting Barron's transfer to a different command.**

**Tobias Lear Letter, 31 May 1805, from Lear, U.S. Consul-General and Peace Commissioner, to Don Gerardo Joseph de Souza, Spanish Consul at Tripoli and Commissioner on behalf of the Bashaw of Tripoli, offering \$60,000 and all Tripoli citizens held by the United States in exchange for all U.S. citizens held by the Bashaw.**